

Solid Waste Permitting and Inspection

Improper handling of society's byproducts in the form of domestic, commercial and industrial wastes can pose direct threats to both the public health and the quality of Maryland's water resources. Since 1914, Maryland has had laws governing how solid wastes are to be handled to minimize the significant risks posed by these materials. The Solid Waste Program is responsible for two important elements of environmental regulation: the review of the scientific information needed to support application for new solid waste disposal facilities, and the inspection and enforcement of regulations at permitted and unpermitted disposal facilities. Regulated facilities include municipal sanitary landfills, rubble landfills, landclearing debris landfills, non-hazardous industrial waste landfills, municipal incinerators and waste-to-energy facilities, solid waste processing and composting facilities, solid waste transfer stations, sewage sludge utilization and management sites, sewage sludge composting facilities, natural wood waste recycling facilities, and scrap tire handling facilities.

The Program is responsible for approximately 70 permitted and 70 proposed facilities at any given time, as well as 40 to 50 enforcement actions against unpermitted solid waste facilities, and complaint investigations amounting to several hundred per year. The permit review activities cover a broad range of environmental and engineering elements to insure that new facilities use state-of-the-art techniques to protect the state's surface water, ground water, air, and other natural resources. The compliance staff performs inspections and investigations to find, stop and clean up illegal dumps and operational problems at permitted facilities. Typical problems which are corrected include waste-related odor problems, soil erosion at solid waste facilities, discharges of pollutants to surface water, groundwater pollution, and inadequate cover leading to the propagation of potentially disease-bearing animals such as rats, flies and mosquitoes.

On October 9, 1993, new federal regulations governing municipal sanitary landfills went into effect nationwide. These rules are having a significant impact on the regulated community in Maryland, and they are effective regardless of state requirements. As nearly all of the affected facilities in Maryland are County-owned landfills, this will increase the burden on the local jurisdictions significantly. Currently, the Program is working to integrate these new federal requirements for municipal landfills into the program, and to obtain approval for Maryland's program from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. Although no federal funds will be available to support this program, these actions will help the local governments and other elements of the regulated community by insuring that only one set of rules will be applicable to their facilities. In 1995, Maryland obtained a substantial partial approval of our solid waste program, which allows MDE a substantial degree of latitude to interpret and apply the new requirements, which would be lacking in the strict interpretation of the federal requirements.

Another major regulatory change being considered by the Department is the requirement for liners and leachate collection systems at rubble landfills, and/or other requirements to provide additional environmental protection. Even though most of the building materials contained in construction and demolition debris are inert, some components of the waste stream may contain or produce through decay substances which degrade water quality. Also, these measures will aid in protecting our water resources from pollution in the event that unacceptable waste materials are present in the waste stream delivered to this type of facility, and escape detection before burial.

Questions or complaints about solid waste activities? Call (410) 537-3424.

Maryland Department of the Environment
1800 Washington Blvd
Baltimore, MD 21230
410-537-3000 • 1-800-633-6101